



EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE TOWARDS MARRIAGE

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Abstract

This research paper explores the evolving perspectives of young people on marriage, influenced by societal changes, cultural norms, and personal experiences. It highlights the impact of globalization, education, and technology on attitudes toward marriage, emphasizing the role of caste and religion in Indian society. Through comparative analysis, the study reveals that while many young individuals still aspire to marry, their definitions and expectations have shifted, reflecting broader cultural dynamics. This understanding is crucial for policymakers, educators, and families to support healthy relationships and adapt to changing family structures.

Keywords - Marriage, Youth Perspectives, Cultural Norms, Caste, Religion, Globalization, Technology, Relationship Dynamics, India, Family Structures.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a fundamental part of society, shaped by traditions, values, and changing expectations. Recently, there's been a lot of focus on how young people see marriage, as societal norms and relationships evolve. Understanding these perspectives is crucial for policymakers, educators, and families. It provides valuable insights into the future of relationships and families. This research explores how young people think about marriage, what influences their views, and how societal changes affect their attitudes. By studying the many perspectives young people have on marriage, this study aims to deepen our understanding of this important part of human relationships.

Marriage and relationships are always changing everywhere in the world. For instance, a study in South Africa found that many young people still want to get married and feel positive about it. These changes in how people view marriage can be influenced by what happens globally, as people learn about different marriage practices from other countries. This global information can shape how people in local communities think about marriage. For example, young people in Macedonia have access to lots of information about modern marriage practices, like choosing their own partners, having more equal relationships, and allowing same-sex couples to adopt children.

Today, marriage is a complicated topic for researchers and young people who plan to start their own families. Modern married life isn't just about traditional relationships between a man and a woman; it also includes same-sex partnerships and other living arrangements. Young people have many different opinions about marriage and relationships, so it's important to understand their beliefs and how they compare to the traditional idea of marriage as a long-term commitment between a man and a woman. Valuing traditional

marriage doesn't mean a young person is against other types of relationships, like cohabitation or same-sex marriage.

Indian society is very diverse, with differences in caste, religion, region, language, and culture. These differences stem from historical and cultural backgrounds. The norms and values in India are shaped by socio-economic and political situations. Caste and religion play significant roles in shaping social life. People's behaviors are heavily influenced by the norms and values tied to their caste and religion. To understand why caste and religion are so central to daily life, it's important to look at the historical contexts that have legitimized and institutionalized these practices.

In India, various social groups like castes, religions, and tribes have their own rules that influence how people form relationships both within and outside their group. Marriage, as a social institution, is governed by the norms and values of these groups and society at large. These norms and values often shape marriage choices, limiting individual preferences to what is acceptable within the group.

Family and marriage are important institutions in all societies, each with its own specific rules and customs. In traditional Indian society, people generally follow social norms and values dictated by caste and religion. These values are deeply rooted in family and marriage practices, preserving long-standing traditions. Marriage and family institutions play crucial roles, such as socializing individuals, providing recognition and security, and offering economic and emotional support. The customs and norms around marriage and family are influenced by the cultural practices of each group. Every tribe, caste, or religious community has its own rules regarding marriage and family, which members are expected to follow. This maintains a closed and endogamous structure for marriage within each group.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Dennison and Koerner (2006) found that adolescents have both realistic and unrealistic expectations about marriage, which are influenced by their developmental stage.
2. Kefalas et al. (2011) in their study highlighted the Indian youth preferences for marriage. In the Indian context, religion and caste play a significant role in determining the role of parents in selecting partners for their children, with women's individual preferences being highly restricted. However, with increasing participation in higher education, women are enjoying some freedom to select their life partners, but still within the boundaries of caste and religious norms.
3. Radulovic and Avirovic (2016) in their research paper "Youth Perception on Marriage and Married Life: An Analysis from the Republic of Macedonia" presented the opinions of young people in the Republic of Macedonia about marriage. This study conducted a survey of 120 university students to understand their thoughts and feelings about marriage and family life. The results of the survey helped in understanding current trends and predict what might happen with marriage and family in Macedonia in the future. The findings of the study revealed that, while there are some concerning negative trends in statistical data related to birth rate, marriage, and divorce, the survey found that young people in Macedonia view marriage as a natural and positive part of their lives. They see marriage as a sign of maturity, success, and prosperity.
4. Ramsheena and Gundemeda (2015) in their research paper "Youth and Marriage: A Study of Changing Marital Choices among the University Students in India" looks at how higher education can influence the marital choices of students at the University of Hyderabad. The study collected data from 450 students through surveys and 20 students through open-ended questionnaires to understand their views on marital choices and the changing forms of marriage. The results showed that cultural factors like caste, religion, class, and family still play a big role in the marital choices of students.
5. Salts et al. (2022) revealed that young people's attitudes towards marriage and reproduction are shaped by various factors, including family background, education, and social media.

DISCUSSION

The views of young people on marriage have changed over time, reflecting broader changes in society and the economy. According to a Pew Research Center study, most young adults aged 18 to 34 who have never been married want to get married someday, with 69% expressing this desire. Similarly, about half of young adults without children hope to become parents in the future. However, the importance of marriage

and parenthood in leading a fulfilling life has decreased among young adults, who now consider job satisfaction and having close friends more important.

The significance of marriage in Indian society has not declined rapidly, but it is changing in modern times. In India, individuals about to get married often have less say in choosing their partners. Parents frequently select their children's partners based on religious and caste norms, playing a significant role until their children marry. This choice is influenced by the values and norms of their community and caste. Women's individual preferences are often restricted, although with more women pursuing higher education, they have gained some freedom in choosing partners. However, this freedom remains constrained by caste and religious norms, and women usually select partners from similar backgrounds. In urban areas, women may also take into account the groom's family's social class.

In Indian society, marrying within one's own group has been a traditional norm for many centuries. However, in modern India, this norm is undergoing changes. Today, young people consider this tradition less important when choosing a spouse. A 2015 study by Ramsheena and Gundemeda found that university students prefer marriages that cross caste and religious boundaries. The study also showed that Indian youth prefer living together before marriage only with legal approval from their communities. Regarding caste and religious identities, the study revealed that university students do not prioritize these identities in their marital choices.

Factors influencing attitudes and aspirations of young people towards marriage:

1. **Diverse Perspectives:** Research has shown a wide range of views among youth regarding marriage, reflecting varying attitudes towards commitment, partnership, and traditional values. Some young people see marriage as a lifelong commitment, while others view it as less essential to their future.
2. **Influence of Social Media and Technology:** Social media and technology play a significant role in shaping how youth view marriage. Studies indicate that exposure to idealized portrayals of relationships online can influence young people's expectations and perceptions about marriage.
3. **Economic Considerations:** Economic factors strongly influence youth's views on marriage. Concerns about financial stability, career goals, and economic uncertainty affect their readiness to get married.
4. **Changing Gender Dynamics:** Evolving gender roles are a key factor influencing youth's perspectives on marriage. Shifting expectations of equality and the impact of traditional gender norms affect how young people view commitment. For example, teenage girls' attitudes about marriage and financial success have changed over the past 45 years.
5. **Desire for Personal Growth and Autonomy:** Modern youth prioritize personal growth, autonomy, and self-discovery before considering marriage. They see individual development and self-fulfillment as important factors in making decisions about long-term relationships.
6. **Impact on Family Structures:** Research suggests that young people's views on partnership and family formation may influence future family structures. While many teens still expect to marry, cohabit, and have children, there's growing doubt about traditional marriage. Cohabitation is increasingly seen as a "testing ground" for marriage, suggesting a shift towards diverse family models.
7. **Personal Experiences:** Individual experiences within families, communities, and past relationships shape how youth perceive marriage. Positive or negative encounters with marriage can influence their attitudes towards commitment and partnership.
8. **Education and Awareness:** Access to information, sex education, and discussions about healthy relationships can impact youth's perspectives on marriage. Learning communication skills, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence helps shape their understanding of successful partnerships.

Implications for the Institution of Marriage:

1. **Marriage Rates and Trends:** Understanding youth perspectives on marriage helps predict trends in marriage rates, patterns of cohabitation, and attitudes towards long-term commitment. This understanding is valuable for policymakers and researchers studying demographic changes.

2. **Family Dynamics:** The views of young people on marriage can influence family structures, parenting approaches, and relationships between generations. Recognizing these perspectives is crucial for promoting family unity and addressing the challenges faced by modern families.

3. **Legal and Social Policies:** Insights into youth perspectives on marriage can guide the development of legal frameworks, social policies, and support systems for couples. Addressing the needs and concerns of young people can help create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all types of relationships.

CONCLUSION

Youth perspectives on marriage are intricate and influenced by a variety of factors, including societal changes, cultural norms, personal experiences, and education. The research underscores how attitudes toward marriage are evolving, with young people expressing a desire for personal growth, autonomy, and self-discovery before committing to long-term relationships. This desire for self-discovery and personal growth reflects a broader cultural shift toward individualism and personal fulfillment, impacting various aspects of modern life, including relationships and family structures.

Economic factors also significantly shape youth views on marriage. As economic uncertainty and living costs rise, young people are delaying marriage and prioritizing financial stability. The research indicates that addressing economic concerns and promoting financial literacy and planning can help young individuals navigate the challenges of modern life and make informed decisions about their relationships and family formation.

Changing gender dynamics are another crucial factor influencing youth perspectives on marriage. With greater recognition of gender equality and evolving roles of women in society, young people desire more egalitarian relationships. The research underscores the importance of fostering healthy communication, conflict resolution skills, and challenging traditional gender norms to support successful partnerships and family formation.

The influence of social media and technology cannot be ignored in shaping youth perspectives on marriage. With the prevalence of social media and online dating platforms, young people encounter a wide range of relationship models and experiences, which can influence their expectations and perceptions of marriage. The research emphasizes the importance of promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills to help young individuals navigate the complexities of modern relationships and make informed decisions about their partnerships.

The findings of this research have significant implications for policymakers, educators, and families. Understanding youth perspectives on marriage is crucial for promoting healthy relationships and family structures, addressing societal challenges, and supporting the next generation of families. By promoting education and awareness, addressing economic concerns, and fostering healthy communication and conflict resolution skills, we can support young individuals in their journey toward successful partnerships and family formation.

Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of promoting diversity and inclusivity in relationships and family structures. With growing recognition of same-sex marriage and non-traditional family models, it is essential to challenge traditional norms and promote acceptance and understanding of diverse relationship models. By fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect, we can support young individuals in their pursuit of meaningful and fulfilling relationships, regardless of their background or circumstances.

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